



E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC. PUBLISHERS

201 PARK AVE. SOUTH, NEW YORK 3, N.Y.

7/2/63

Dear Mr. Newman:

Answering yours of June 28th.

In accordance with our agreement with our authors, we are not permitted to give the addresses of our authors. If you will address your correspondence to Mr. Eric Partridge, c/o E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., we will forward same onto him for reply to you.

E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

# POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



Mr. Eric P. Newman, Secretary

Edison Bros. Stres, Inc.

400 Washington Avenue

St. Louis 2, Missouri

November 11, 1963

Professor Harry Levin  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Professor Levin:

I am the father of one of your students this year and would like to have your comment on what I believe are two bawdy puns of Shakespeare which have not, so far as I can determine, ever been published or commented upon. They involve the word "bunghole" in Hamlet, V:1:210, etc. and the word "bung" in Henry IV, Part II, II:4:136. I believe each is intended primarily to refer to "ass hole" and only incidentally to a barrel bung.

The use of "bunghole" results, as I see it, in a change in the meaning of lines 219, 220 following the first citation so that the "wind" means "flatus", and "clay" means "feces". Both Alexander's dust and Caesar's clay both are therefore alluded to as feces. The barrel meaning is pointless, only a justification for the pun.

The use of "filthy bung" is primarily bawdy and is warped to mean a cutpurse. I find no other use of "bung" meaning "cutpurse", only when expanded to "bung nipper", etc. "Bung" only means "pocket" when it stands alone. The word "filthy" would not be applied as an adjective if bung was to mean only cutpurse or purse.

My basis for these conclusions is the translation, in 1611, in The Dictionary of the French and English Tongues, by Randle Cotgrave, of the French word "Cul de Cheval" (Sea Anemone) as "a small ugly fish resembling a man's bung-hole". This shows "bunghole" meant "ass hole" in Shakespeare's time. "Bung" and "bunghole" are interchangeable when used in a bawdy sense.



-2-

Professor Harry Levin

November 11, 1963

All this has come about in my 15 year research for the true meaning of the New England Americanism "bungtown" and thus I had to work on Shakespeare along the way.

Will you be nice enough to let me know if you think I have added something or did you know this already?

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN  
atb

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS  
DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE • 402 BOYLSTON HALL

November 18, 1963

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
Secretary  
Edison Brothers Stores, Inc.  
400 Washington Avenue  
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman:

With regard to the verbal point you raise in your letter of November 11th, it is one which has escaped the eye of Eric Partridge, whose Shakespeare's Bawdy is the usual compendium for significances of this kind. Nonetheless, I believe that your surmise is justified; that there is at least the possibility of a metaphorical double-entendre in the two lines you cite; and that, if it gives you any satisfaction, you may well claim it as your contribution to Shakespeare scholarship.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

*Harry Levin*

Harry Levin  
Irving Babbitt Professor of  
Comparative Literature

HL:eaf



November 27, 1963

Professor Harry Levin  
Harvard University  
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Levin:

Thank you for your note indicating that my surmise appears to be justified as to the interpretation of "bung" and "bunghole" in Shakespeare.

I wrote to Eric Partridge and he agrees to the suggested meaning and will insert it in his next editions of "Shakespeare's Bawdy" and his various slang dictionaries.

I believe I am in line for one of the "lowest" distinctions in Shakespeare research.

Thank you for your kindness.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb



Recd 11/24/64

Dear Mr. Newman,

"That firm affiance," quoth I, "had I in you before, or else I would never have gone so far over the shoes, to pluck you out of the mire. Not to make many words, (since you will needs know,) the King says flatly, you are a miser and a snudge, and he never hoped better of you." "Nay, then," quoth he, "questionless some planet that loves not cider hath conspired against me." "Moreover, which is worse, the King hath vowed to give Turwin one hot breakfast only with the bungs that he will pluck out of your barrels. I cannot stay at this time to report each circumstance that passed, but the only counsel that my long cherished kind inclination can possibly contrive, is now in your old days to be liberal: such victuals or provision as you have, presently distribute it frankly amongst poor soldiers; I would let them burst their bellies with cider and bathe in it, before I would run into my prince's ill opinion for a whole sea of it.

This is taken from Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller 1594. The episode is one of the farsicle burlesques (this one about the cider merchant) in the beginning of this "quasi-novel." I don't know if the author has the same thing in mind with his reference to your favorite word as you would predict, but I thought you might like to know this quote exists.

Andy's "Room mate"

Alike

Touff

November 25, 1964

Dear Mike,

I am ever so grateful for the  
excerpt from "The Unfortunate Traveler".  
Your contribution will be acknowledged when-  
ever the material is published.

Now I know the origin of the ex-  
pression "hot cross bungs".

Cordially,



Chl.- v r 88

22 March 1968

Dear Mr. Newman:

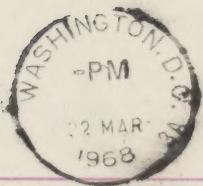
When you return to St. Louis, look up  
two books by the late <sup>423 ST. 28</sup> Beckett T. Starnes: The English  
Dictionary from Cawdrey to Johnson, 1604-1755; and  
<sup>PA 2353, S7</sup> Renaissance Dictionaries, English-Latin, and Latin-English.  
These will supply names and dates of early English  
dictionaries.

minismatics.

I'm sorry to miss your lecture on

Sincerely yours,  
James G. McManaway

Folger, Shod. Libr



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

U.S. POSTAGE

Mr. Eric P. Newman  
400 Washington Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri



from Dan Bartlett

BUNG TOWN —

NICKNAME OF  
COLD HARBOR SPRING  
N.Y. —

REASON: MANY COOPER  
SHOPS IN EARLY 19TH  
CENTURY — MANY CASKS  
+ BARRELS INCLUDING  
'BUNGS' — STOPPERS FOR  
BARRELS —

SEE SHANNIK'S AMER NICKNAMES  
H.W. WILSON + CO NY - 1937

March 27, 1968

Mr. Dan Bartlett  
Bartlett, Stix & Bartlett  
Attorneys at Law  
408 Pine Street  
St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Dear Dan:

In appreciation of your continual research with respect to the word "Bungtown", I am sending you, herewith, a copy of SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY, which is written by my friend, Eric Partridge.

The edition which will come out in July, of this year, will include a proper understanding of the word "bung-hole", in HAMLET.

I have already located four cities which are called "Bungtown", Cold Harbor Springs, New York, being one of them.

I will keep you advised when my monograph relating to this subject is completed.

Thank you, again, for your helpfulness.

Sincerely,

ERIC V. NEWMAN

EPN/atb



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis 5, Missouri

March 29, 1968

Mr. James G. McManaway  
Folger Library  
201 East Capital  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McManaway:

Thank you, very much, for your postal giving me the bibliographies containing early dictionaries. Those bibliographies will be available to me here but I presume these dictionaries themselves will not. May I call upon you to look in your early dictionaries, under the words "bung" and "bung hole" to see what any of them show.

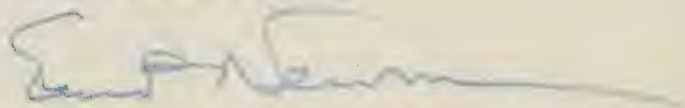
The dictionary which has given me the lead is entitled "A dictionarie of the French and English tongues", London, 1611, by Randle Cotgrave. This dictionary translates the word "Cul de cheval" as: "A small and ouglie fish, or excrescence of the Sea, resembling a man's bung-hole, and called the red Nettle (= Sea Anemone)."

There were subsequent Cotgrave editions and I would appreciate confirming whether my quotation is absolutely correct or not.

If you have the opportunity to glance in any other dictionaries, I will be most grateful to see if any of them refer to "bung" or "bung hole" as anything else but the parts of a barrel.

Many thanks for your interest.

Sincerely yours,



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC  
EDUCATION SOCIETY

EPN/stb

2 Henry IV (New Variorum),

ed. Matthias G. Shaaber

---

Hamlet, ed. J. Dover Wilson  
(New Cambridge Sh.)



# BUM (meaning bottom).

A Midsummer Night's Dream II, 1, 53

Puck

Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me; 52

Then slip I from her bum, down topples she 53

Timon of Athens ~~II~~ I, ii, 240  
<sup>Apermantus</sup> putting-out of bums

Excessive bowing

Measure for Measure II, i, ~~221~~ 221

II i, ~~222~~ 222

Pompey: Bum, sir. 221 ~~222~~

Escalus: Truth, and your bum is the greatest ~~thing~~ <sup>th</sup> 222  
thing about you 223 ~~224~~ ~~225~~

# Hamlet

V:1

## Prince of Denmark

155

*Ham.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio!  
Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of  
Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bung-hole? 210

*Hor.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider  
so.

*Ham.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither  
with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; (as  
thus:) Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alex-  
ander returneth to dust; the dust is earth. Of earth  
we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he  
was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away. 220  
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!

But soft! but soft awhile! Here comes the king.

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, [a Priest,] and a Coffin,  
with Lords attendant.*

The queen, the courtiers! Who is this they follow? 224  
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken  
The corse they follow did with desperate hand  
Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.  
Couch we awhile, and mark. 228

[Retires with Horatio.]

*Laer.* What ceremony else?

*Ham.*

That is Laertes,

A very noble youth. Mark.

211 curiously: *minutely*

214 modesty: *moderation*

222 flaw: *squall of wind*

227 Fordo it: *undo its*

228 Couch: *remain concealed*

likelihood: *probability*

223 awhile; cf. n.

estate: *rank*

As You Like It

Act III Scene 2

Written about 1600

First published 1623

Orlando: Can you remember any of the principal evil  
that he laid to the charge of women?

Rosalind: There were none principal. They were all like one  
another as halfpence are, every one fault seeming monstrous  
till his fellow fault come to match it.



this is the very coinage of your brain:  
this bodiless creation ecstasy  
is very cunning in.

Hamlet Act 3 Scene 4

Shakespeare

Written <sup>between</sup> 1596 & 1599.

Henry IV : Second Part

Act II Scene 4 line 136

Doll Tearsheet, a ~~harsh~~ ~~mistress~~ whose  
she is ~~is~~ vulgar mouthed in the few lines she speaks

Doll

"Charge me! I scorn you, scurvy companion. What!  
you poor, base, rascally, cheating, back-linen mate.  
Away you mouldy rogue, away. I am  
meat for your master."

Pistol

I know you, Mistress Dorothy.

Doll

Away, you cut-purse rascal! you filthy bung,  
away! By this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your  
mouldy chops and you play the saucy cuttle  
with me. Away you bottle-ale rascal! you  
basket-hilt stale juggler, you!

The Yale Shakespeare

says "bung" <sup>"is slang for"</sup> ~~cut-purse~~ "sharpener"

cuttle = slang for cut-purse

PE  
2801  
D.S.  
V.3

Dialect Notes Vol III (New Haven 1913)

*High  
East*

from *Aroostook*  
Word list submitted by Prof Horace M. Estabrooke  
(1849-1908) Univ of Maine Professor

p. 209 bungdown, n. A large copper coin, evidently  
a corruption of bungtown.

Word list from East Alabama

p. 295' bung-fodder, n. Toilet paper or a  
Substitute therefor.

Wash Univ  
PE 3721  
67

Francis Grose

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue  
(first edition 1785 London). Added in Second edition  
~~third edition (1791)~~ of 1788 the following:  
BUNG UPWARDS. Said of a person lying on  
his face.

listed also  
~~mentioned~~ in Eric Partridge

A dictionary of Slang & Unconventional  
English.  
compared to *arse upward*



Noah Webster,  
An American Dictionary of the English Language (New York)  
(1828)

BUNG n. 1. A stopple of the orifice in the bilge of a cask.  
cask; Mortimer

2. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.

v. to stop the orifice in the bilge of a cask with a bung; to close up.

BUNGHOLE n. 1. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.

Noah Webster 1836  
1848  
An American Dictionary

423

N.Y. 1828

W 395

Ref PE 16W

Webster's New Dict

W 3

1940

Ed. 2

1941

1945

1941

1785 Francis Cross

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue

PE 3721

G 7

1963

(1796  
edition)

423

G 912

(1839  
edition)

1720  
edition

John Kersey <sup>reviser</sup> The New World of Words

compiled by Edward Phillips

Harv., Yale, Univ. of Chic., Univ. of Ill.

B. E. <sup>part</sup> A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and  
(name  
not  
known)  
Modern of the Language (dates not known  
but about 1640-1700)

Thomas Blount Minerographia 1656 (printed)

Folger Lib. 1250, 1251, 1252, 1681

Wash Univ Lib — Nothing on Bung or Bungle

Nathan Bailey  
Universal Etymological English Dictionary  
first edit 1721 3 rev 1728 (4th edit.)

Nothing on Bung or Bungle

John Minsheu: Ductor in  
linguas, 1617

---

John Bullokar: English  
Expositor, 1616

Giovanni Florio: A worles  
of wordes (Eng. - Itap.), 1598

---

: Queen Annas New  
wordes & words, 1611



Henry Cockram

423

C 645

1623

reprint

Nothing

James G. McManaway

Folger Library

201 E. Capital

Washington, D.C.

Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton,  
The Roaring Girl or Moll Cut-Purse  
(London 1611).

Prof. of English  
Univ. of Va.

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, Fredson Bowers,  
editor (Cambridge, England 1958), Vol III, p. 86, 87

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,  
(London, 1873) Vol III, p. 217 ~~187~~

Act V Scene 1 line ~~172~~ 172-3

~~Trapdoor~~

~~Trapdoor~~: Ben mort, shall you and  
heave a booth, mill a keen or  
nip a bung, <sup>(173)</sup>

line 180-2

Moll: Marry this my lord sayes hee: Ben  
mort (good wench) shall you and I heave  
a booth, mill a keen, or nip a bung? <sup>(181)</sup>  
shall you and I rob a house, or cut a  
purse?

Mentioned in Oxford Dictionary

Wash Univ Lib  
PR 2480



# OXFORD DICTIONARY

## BUNG

Pock pocket

1597 Shakespeare Henry IV II. 14. 138

"You cut-purses Roscall, you filthy Bung"

Bungtown is not in the Oxford English Dictn.  
Oxford 1933 1

Brunn = ~~times~~ a contraction of Brunnensgem  
"counterfeit, no genuine"

Brunnensgem = vulgar form of Birmingham  
counterfeit coin (from groats made)  
there in 17th cent.  
counterfeit or cheap

Brunnish = counterfeit <sup>(as to coin)</sup> ~~the same~~ ~~coin~~  
not genuine

Samuel Johnson

A Dictionary of the English Language (London 1755)

~~Vol I~~ #

July  
1964  
~~Bung~~

first edition

BUNG A stopple for a barrel.

BUNG HOLE [from bung and hole] The hole at which the barrel is filled, and which is afterward stopped up.

Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung hole.

Shakesp.



Eric Partridge

"A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English  
NY 1961 (first edition 1937)

272 Partridge  
1963

p109

Bung

4. (Also bung-hole.) the anus: low: late <sup>C.</sup> 18-20 <sup>Century</sup>

Noah Webster

Webster's Third New International

\* Dictionary of the English Language  
(Springfield Mass 1961)

Bung

2a the cecum or the anus esp. of <sup>domestic</sup> animals  
2b also bung gut: the anus of a slaughtered  
animal used as a large casing for sausage  
meat

Bungtown

n [probably from Bungtown (now Barneyville)

Rehoboth, Massachusetts where it was manufactured]:

a copper token resembling an English halfpenny  
that circulated in the U.S. in the 18<sup>th</sup> + 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Noah Webster

Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language  
2nd Edition (Springfield Mass 1951)

"

bung

5. A casing for sausage meat.

"

"

bungtown copper or cent

[Probably from slang  
bung to cheat, from bung pick pocket] An  
imitation, or counterfeit, of the English penny.

"



Oxford Dialect

Cattle-Bung = Cut purse  
↑        ↑  
knife    purse

The word bung is used to mean  
purse in writings of <sup>1567</sup> 1591 1600  
1572 1607

In 1610 "Bung is now used for a  
pocket, heretofore for a purse"  
from Martin's Mark-all p. 37 by Rowlands  
Continually used then 1740

"  
Bungtown subs. (old), Birmingham.  
Bungtown Coppers = money coined for  
the government by private Birmingham  
firms: hence counterfeit coin "

"  
Brummagem (3) Copper money struck  
by Boulton <sup>and</sup> Watt & their works at  
Soho, Birmingham (1787) "

notes George Eliot - Felix Holt, xxx

If anybody says the Radicals are a set of sneaks,  
Brummagem Halfpennies, scamps who want  
to play pitch-and-toss with the property of the country,  
\* \* \*



This is the  
Oxford Dict

Bung 6.\* ~~7~~\* bung-hole, the hole in a cask which  
is closed with the bung; transf. the anus (obs).

→ 1611 Cotgr. Cul de cheval, a small and  
ouglie fish, or excrescence of the Sea, resembling  
a man's bung-hole, and called the red  
Nettle [= Sea Anemone]

In the Oxford Dict ~~supp~~ supplement of  
1933 the word Bungtown  
is listed as U.S. and the origins  
in various literary items given.  
on basis of American publications.

Maximilian Schele de Vere "Americanisms: the  
English of the New World" (N.Y. 1872) p. 587

"Bung-town, an imaginary town in New England, so  
called from the slang term to 'bung', meaning to lie. Hence,  
Bung-town Copper is a favorite name of the spurious English  
half penny, which has no currency in the country. "these flowers  
weren't fitted a Bung-town copper." (Judd, Margaret p. 19). It is said  
that such a coin was really once made - a counterfeit, of course - in a  
town then bearing the  
name of Bung-town,  
but since known  
as Rehoboth  
in Massachusetts."

Randle Cotgrave

his dict<sup>was</sup> published in 1611

his French-English dictionary was published in 1611  
4 editions of 1632, 1650, 1660, 1673

"A dictiona~~ir~~ie of the French and English  
tongues" (London 1611)



Eric Partridge

Wash Univ  
PE 3721 P3

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional  
English (London 1937)

Bung

2. In cant of mid-C. 16 - early 19, a  
purse. Harman, Greene, Grose, Cf.  
A.-S. and Frisian. pung, a purse (Oxford  
English Dictionary)

3. Hence in cant or low slang of late  
C. 16-17, e.g. in Shakespeare, a cut purse  
Hence bung-knife, late C. 16, is either  
knife for purse cutting or one kept in a  
purse. —

4 (Also bung-hole) the anus: low:  
late C. 18-20.

Dictionary of American Slang  
Harold Wentworth and Stuart B.  
Flexner 1967 edit supplement

---

bring hole (taboo) 1. the  
anus, 2. To have, permit or  
prefer anal intercourse.

only in supplement

Cawdry Robert 1604  
reprint

PE 1620

C 35

1604a

Wash. Univ.

nothing



The American encyclopaedic dictionary  
Chicago 1894 edited by Robert Hunter  
423 Am 35

Woburn

An Universal Dictionary  
William Falconer (<sup>London</sup> 1771)

V 23

F 18

1771

Nothing

his Chap x's case  
cant justify.

George Parker, "Lifes Painter of Variegated Characters  
in Public and Private life" (1789) p 122,  
a protestation of reluctance

"I do beseech my fair readers to shun it, lest  
in this grimy path, they meet a snake in  
the grass"

Elisha Coles English Dictionary (1676)  
just to include cant in genl dict

"Tas no Disparagement to unducted the Cantine  
Terms: It may change to save your Throat from  
being cut, or (at least) your Pocket from  
being picked."



PC 2642  
A 2  
C 7

Randle Cotgrave

A Dictionnaire of the French and  
English Tongues

1632 edition

In the French English portion

Cul de cheval. A small, and ouglie fish,  
or exorescence of the Sea, resembling  
a mans bung-hole, and called, the  
red Nettle.

Cul: An arse, bumme, tayle,  
nockandro, fundament.

Cul d'asne. as Cubassau. the small Sea-nettle

asne = asse

Under English-French portion

Nettle. Ortie, hortie

the small stinging red nettle. Ortie  
griesche, ortie grecque

A Bung: Bondon, tampon, tapon

A Bung-hole. L'oyeu d'un vaisseau, le trou ou le bondon est mis

~~Bungtown~~ ~~Bungthole~~ is not listed

This is the sea anemone

Shakespeare's use of the word flaw

flaw —

a sudden gust of wind

A NEW VARIORUM EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE, Matthias A. Shaaber, (Vol.23), Philadelphia & London (J.B.Lippincott Company), 1940. (The Second Part of Henry The Fourth)

130. Bung) STEEVENS (Var. '78): In the cant of thievery, to nip a bung was to cut a purse; and among an explanation of many of these terms in Martin Mark-All's Apologie to the Bel-man of London, 1610 (ed.Judges, The Elizabethan Underworld, 1930, p. 407), it is said that "Bung is now used for a pocket, heretofore for a purse." - CLARKE (ed. 1865): We think that Doll, besides thus by inference calling Pistol a "pick-pocket," includes allusion to his being saturated with the fumes of the beer-barrel. - N.E.D. (Bung sb.<sup>2</sup>): Thieves' Cant. Obs. a.A purse. b. A pick-pocket. (This line is quoted as an example, but in every other quotation the word means purse.) - NARES (ed. 1888) quotes some verses from An Age for Apes (1658) in ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ which bung means pickpocket.

6/20/60



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6/20/60

A NEW VARIORUM EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE, Matthias A. Shaaber, (Vol.23), Philadelphia & London (J.B.Lippincott Company), 1940. (The Second Part of Henry The Fourth)

130. Bung) STEEVENS (Var. '78): In the cant of thievery, to nip a bung was to cut a purse; and among an explanation of many of these terms in Martin Mark-All's Apologie to the Bel-man of London, 1610 (ed.Judges, The Elizabethan Underworld, 1930, p. 407), it is said that "Bung is now used for a pocket, heretofore for a purse." - CLARKE (ed. 1865): We think that Doll, besides thus by inference calling Pistol a "pick-pocket," includes allusion to his being saturated with the fumes of the beer-barrel. - N.E.D. (Bung sb.<sup>2</sup>): Thieves' Cant. Obs. a.A purse. b. A pick-pocket. (This line is quoted as an example, but in every other quotation the word means purse.) - NARES (ed. 1888) quotes some verses from An Age for Apes (1658) in ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ which bung means pickpocket.

6/20/60

Martin Mark-all's Apologie  
to the Bel-man of London  
published like 1610

"Bung is now used for a pocket,  
heretofore for a gurse."

Webster Dict 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit  
New Intl 1945

bung -

a casing for  
Sausage meat

June 28, 1963

E.P.Dutton & Company, Inc.  
300 Park Avenue South  
New York City, New York

Gentlemen:

You published a book by Eric Partridge  
entitled "Shakespeare's Bawdy" (D-55).

Do you have the address of Eric Partridge,  
as I would very much like to write him.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis 5, Missouri

July 8, 1963

Mr. Eric Partridge  
C/o E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.  
201 Park Avenue, South  
New York 3, New York

Dear Mr. Partridge:

Since you have written "Shakespeare's Bawdy", I have no hesitation to ask your opinion on an etymological problem I have in connection with a numismatic book I am writing.

I am endeavoring to find the meaning of the word "Bungtown" which now is an American slang expression relating to shortweight, unauthorized, or counterfeit copper coins. Its first written use appears to be in a 1787 New England newspaper as "Bungtown Coppers". There is no city named Bungtown, but three different American cities had that nickname. My conclusion is that "Bungtown" was a humorously derisive American slang name meaning "ass hole town".

The word "Bung" and "Bunghole" originally referred respectively to the plug and to the outlet of a barrel, as you know. How soon the pornographic mind worked these expressions into a reference to the anus, I do not know, but I have found two references in Shakespeare which indicate to me that the Shakespearean audiences understood this latter meaning. In modern times they have been so used as the American Thesaurus of Slang shows.

In Hamlet, Act V, Scene 1, Line 210, it is indicated that the dust of Alexander might be found stopping a bunghole. This strange reference could only be a pun, as I see it, and refers to the dust of Alexander being feces in the anus. The next few lines then return to the idea of a barrel bunghole, but line 220 indicates that Caesar's clay "might stop a hole to keep the wind away". This seems to compound the pun and to reinforce the anal reference. These seem like pointless comments unless a dirty pun was intended.

-2-

Mr. Eric Partridge

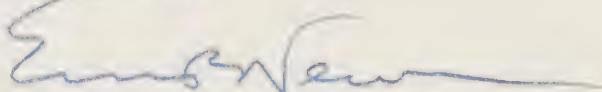
July 8, 1963

In Henry IV, Part II, Act II, Scene 4, Line 136, the prostitute, "Doll Tearsheet", calls Pistol "You filthy bung, you cut purse rascal you." In this usage the word "bung" was fundamentally a bag-like coin purse with a small hole at the top. Whether this "bung" was derived from the shape of the bunghole of a barrel, I do not know, but the word "bung" is said to refer to a cut purse or bung nipper. I feel that the use of the word "bung" in this situation instead of "bung nipper" is a pun calling Pistol an asshole, particularly because the adjective "filthy" is used and has no significant relationship to a cut purse.

I hope that it is not inconvenient for you to look over these two passages and tell me whether you believe my thoughts are sound or not.

If you have any other unpublished references which might give an explanation to the word "Bungtown", please share them with me. I will be most appreciative. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC  
EDUCATION SOCIETY



Since you've sent me  
2 copies of your letter,  
I presume that you wish me  
to use this second one for comments.

16 July 1963

Eric Partridge  
15 The Woodlands  
Southgate  
London, N.14

July 8, 1963

Mr. Eric Partridge  
C/o E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.  
201 Park Avenue, South  
New York 3, New York

Dear Mr. Partridge:

Since you have written "Shakespeare's Bawdy", I have no hesitation to ask your opinion on an etymological problem I have in connection with a numismatic book I am writing.

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? "Bungtown"  
The word "Bung" and "Bunghole" originally referred respectively to the plug and to the outlet of a barrel, as you know. How soon the pornographic mind worked these expressions into a reference to the anus, I do not know, but I have found two references in Shakespeare which indicate to me that the Shakespearean audiences understood this latter meaning. In modern times they have been so used as the American Thesaurus of Slang shows.

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You could be right, especially for the second reference; yet I doubt it, especially for the first, where the idea of A's dust stopping the bunghole in "barrel" seems to be merely realistic, not pornographic.

-2-

Mr. Eric Partridge

July 8, 1963

X In Henry IV, Part II, Act II, Scene 4, Line 136, the prostitute, "Doll Tearsheet", calls Pistol "You filthy bung, you cut purse rascal you." In this usage the word "bung" was fundamentally a bag-like coin purse with a small hole at the top. Whether this "bung" was derived from the shape of the bunghole of a barrel, I do not know, but the word "bung" is said to refer to a cut purse or bung hipper. I feel that the use of the word "bung" in this situation instead of "bung nipper" is a pun calling Pistol an asshole, particularly because the adjective "filthy" is used and has no significant relationship to a cut purse.

I hope that it is not inconvenient for you to look over these two passages and tell me whether you believe my thoughts are sound or not.

Sorry! I have none. If you have any other unpublished references which might give an explanation to the word "Bungtown", please share them with me. I will be most appreciative. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

  
ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC  
EDUCATION SOCIETY

X Hm, I think, 'cut purse rascal' elucidates 'bung' - an underworld term not everyone in the audience will have understood.

You might well have a look at my Dictionary of the Underworld for both bung & bung-nipper.  
E.P.





Eric P. Newman, Esq.  
Eric P. Newman Monismatic Education Society  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St Louis 5  
Missouri  
U. S. A.

Written or edited by Eric Partridge and published by Messrs Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd,  
68-74 Carter Lane, London, E.C.4.

---

A CLASSICAL DICTIONARY OF THE VULGAR TONGUE by Captain Francis Grose

best edition (1796); royal 8vo.; 45s. U.S.: ~~probably about~~ \$7.90, Barnes & Noble, Inc.;  
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of the English language—and an entertaining, occasionally ribald book it is! *probably September 23*

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*On June 17, the Macmillan Co., Inc., published 'The Gentle  
Art of Lexicography: A Memoir' (personal & expository)  
-at about \$3.25 (or 50¢), I believe. S.F.*

SHORTER SLANG DICTIONARY (20th century; for homes and schools).

18s. U.S.: *Philosophical Library*, \$4.50.

SLANG TODAY AND YESTERDAY: a history and a study.

3rd ed., 3rd imp.; 45s. U.S.: *Macmillan*; \$6.00.

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COMIC ALPHABETS: a light-hearted historical and descriptive sketch. Illustrated by Michael Foreman.

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SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY: a literary and psychological study and a comprehensive glossary.

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Also a paperback at \$1.35.

## ADDRESS

You might  
possibly care to see this.



August 19, 1963

Mr. Eric Partridge  
15 The Woodlands  
Southgate  
London N. 14, England

Dear Mr. Partridge:

I wish to thank you, sincerely, for your comments of July 16, 1963 relative to my letter to you of July 8, 1963 as to the meanings of the words "bung", "bung hole", and "bungtown".

I have continued my study of the subject and am now thoroughly convinced that Shakespeare deliberately used the words "bung" and "bunghole" as puns. If I can convince you, I will feel that I have clarified the meaning of two heretofore unrecognized Shakespearean puns.

I have found a specific reference which indicates that "bunghole" meant "anus" in Shakespearean times. Randle Cotgrave, in his Dictionary of the French and English Tongues, published in London, in 1611, describes the sea anemone which, in French, was known as "cul de cheval". The literal translation of "cul de cheval" is, as you realize, "horse's ass". Cotgrave translates the French "cul de cheval" into English as "a small ugly fish resembling a man's bung-hole and called the Red nettle". Cotgrave, therefore, specifically shows that "bung-hole" meant "anus" at that time. The Oxford Dictionary shows that "bung" also means "bunghole" and refers to "bung" as meaning "anus".

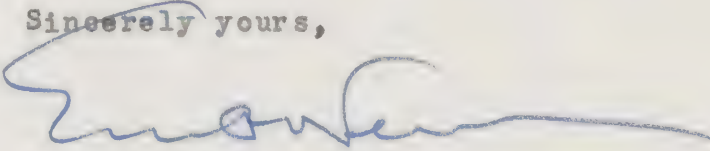
I, therefore, feel certain that Shakespeare selected the place for Alexander's dust deliberately so that he could make a pun on bunghole in Hamlet, Act V, Scene 1, line 210, and in line 220 his "might stop a hole to keep the wind away" is now explained as flatus. The reference in Henry IV, Part 2, Act 2, Scene 4, line 136, where "filthy bung" is used certainly is a pun or else the word "filthy" should never have been selected as applying to a cut purse, as one would use the expression "dirty crook".

If, based upon the additional evidence presented you are further convinced of the soundness of this position, you may use it in one of your subsequent editions.

I also feel that I have enough background material to take a position that the word "bungtown", as used in early America, meant "ass hole town" as I have now found the above uses of the word "bung" prior to 1787 when "bungtown" was first used in writing.

Kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,



ERIC P. NEWMAN  
6450 Cecil Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

EPN/atb

# With Compliments, Eric Partridge

Written or edited by Eric Partridge and published by Messrs Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd,  
68-74 Carter Lane, London, E.C.4.

---

A CLASSICAL DICTIONARY OF THE VULGAR TONGUE by Captain Francis Grose  
*best edition (1796); royal 8vo.; 45s. U.S.: Barnes & Noble, Inc.; \$7.95.*

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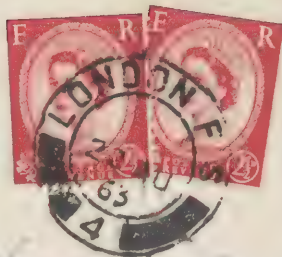
12s. 6d. U.S.: *British Book Centre*; \$2.50.

SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY: a literary and psychological study and a comprehensive glossary.

3rd ed., 2nd imp.; 21s. U.S.: *Dutton*; \$5.00.

Also a paperback at \$1.35.

ADDRESS

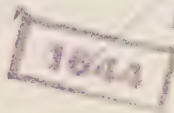


Eric P. Newman & Co

6450 Cecil Avenue

63105 St Louis

Missouri  
USA





22 August 1963

Eric C. Newman, M<sup>d</sup>

Dear Mr Newman,

Thank  
you for your EPIV, atb, dated Aug. 19  
I received yesterday afternoon.  
(Es; I think you're  
right about these three  
syndromes — I thank you  
for the permission to use (I,  
of course, acknowledge) your  
findings.

With lung tum compare  
are-hole of the world in  
the 1961 edition, or later reprint,  
supplement to 17 Dict. of  
Slang & Uncon. English.

Yours sincerely,  
Eric P. Trudge



November 27, 1963

Mr. Eric Partridge  
15 The Woodlands  
Southgate  
London N. 14, England

Dear Mr. Partridge:

You will recall our correspondence relative to the true meaning of the words "bung" and "bunghole" in Shakespeare and your indication that you were going to use my suggestion in your next editions.

Two further things have occurred to me. In your introduction to "Shakespeare's Bawdy" you comment on the references to flatus and I believe it might be well to include the passage in Hamlet as one of those which falls into this group.

My second point is that the word "bung" in Henry IV should not be interpreted as "cutpurse". This is an error in virtually all Shakespearean glossaries. The word "bung" was never used by anyone else, as far as I can determine, to mean "cutpurse". The word "bungnipper" was so used. The word "bung" only refers to "purse", which is derived from the opening in its top. When Doll Tearsheet uses the language "you filthy bung, you outpurse rascal you", the word "bung" means "ass hole" and is used as a double entendre, to tie in to the word "purse" in the next phrase, rather than "cutpurse".

You may be interested to know that Harry Levin, of Harvard University, also agrees with the thoughts I expressed to you in my original correspondence.

My wife and I will be coming to England this summer to visit nontourist places and we have a camping car, which our children left in London, and in which we will sleep as we travel about. If you know any unusual things to see or do which are not in the guide books we would be delighted to know them.

Incidentally, whenever new editions of your works include the new comments on the "bung" matter, I would be most interested to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN  
P.O.Box 14020  
St.Louis, Missouri 63178  
U.S.A.

EPN/ath

15 The Woodlands: Southgate: London, N.14  
30 November 1963

Dear Mr (P. Dr., ? Professor) Newman  
Thank you for your letter of November 27;  
I read, yesterday afternoon.

Am filing it against a new  
edition of S. S. Bawdy. But the  
latest reprint was a very large  
one & it will take several  
years to sell, I fear.

Am no party authority on  
the Topographic Notes & Little-Known  
lovelinesses & delights of rural  
England. But don't miss Hereford-  
shire & Gloucestershire & northern  
Staffordshire in its hills <sup>away from the</sup>  
ports. The Heaven-hintland <sup>(Potteries,</sup>  
contains some beautiful places &  
districts.

Yours sincerely  
Eric Partridge

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STAMPS TO COVER ANY ADDITIONAL POSTAGE  
WHICH MAY BE PAYABLE.

LETTER



Eric P. Newman, Esq.  
P.O. Box 14020  
St Louis  
Missouri 63178  
USA



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*December 1965*  
Hamish Hamilton: USAGE AND ABUSAGE: A Guide to Good English. 6th edn, (=9th printing), rev., enl., up-to-date, 21s. (U.S.: London House, \$4.50). British Penguin, 7s. 6d.; American, \$1.25

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*With compliments, Eric Partridge*

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ADDRESS

HELP

YOU

TIME



Eric P. Newman, Esq.

P.O. Box 14020

St Louis

Missouri 63178

USA

February 25, 1966

Mr. Eric Partridge  
15 The Woodlands  
Southgate  
London N. 14, England

Dear Mr. Partridge:

You were very kind to send me a card announcing your new publications. I am very much interested in knowing whether any of them, as yet, contain "Bungtown", "Bung", or "Bung hole" with the interpretation which we finally worked out. If so, would you let me hear from you as to which one or more it could be found in. I believe you planned to put it into the next edition of SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY and, no doubt, into one of the slang dictionaries.

In the past year or so I have written a book on the paper money of Colonial America which will be published this year and one of the words I came across might be of interest to you. Certain paper money was referred to as "sola" bills. These were bills of exchange used in the Colony of Georgia, drawn in England, countersigned in Georgia, and used as money. The reason they were called "sola" is because only one was issued for the sum in question. Ordinarily there would be a second, third and fourth bill of exchange in the event the first was not paid but when a bill of exchange was used as money one could not issue duplicates.

My very kindest regards, and keep up your wonderful work.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN  
P.O.Box 14020  
St. Louis, Missouri 63178  
U.S.A.

EPN/atb



3 March 66

Eric P. Newman, Esq

Dear Mr Newman,

Thank You for  
your letter (25 February)  
received this morning

The hung group will either  
wholly or partly get into  
Shakespeare's Bowd when

-perhaps rather 'if' - I can  
find the time to tackle  
the job. Am very busy with  
the new edition of A Dict. of  
Slang; then (D.V.) I have  
to tackle Underworld.

Thank You for the note  
about sla.

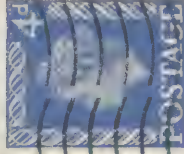
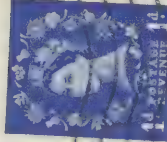
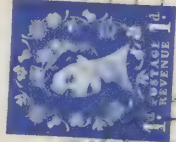
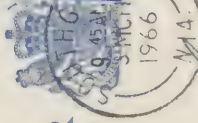
With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely, Eric Partridge

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Joe Santidra  
15 21/2 Woodland  
Southgate  
London, N14

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ABROAD, YOU SHOULD STICK ON POSTAGE  
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WHICH MAY BE PAYABLE.

LETTER



Eric P. Newman,  
Esq.

P.O. Box 14020

St Louis

Missouri 63178  
USA

February 7, 1967

Mr. Eric Partridge  
15 The Woodlands  
Southgate  
London N. 14, England

Dear Mr. Partridge:

It was so nice to hear from you with respect to your new publications and I certainly will look forward to having them in my library.

I would like to know, however, if your 6th Edition contains the word "bungtown", or at least the new definition of "bung" and "bunghole" as Shakespeare used it. Is any of this in the 3rd Edition of SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY?

It may interest you to know that I have just had published my book entitled "The Early Paper Money of America" and I am now going to write a monograph on Bungtown Coinage. This will include the material which we corresponded about a few years ago as well as all the numismatic elements relating to it.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN  
P.O.Box 14020  
St. Louis, Missouri 63178  
U.S.A.

EPN/atb



## THIRTY YEARS ON

Probably April in U.S.

In February 1937 we published Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, which earned a leading article from *The Times* and, since then, such widespread approbation that now, in February 1967, we publish the 6th edition (in all, the 9th printing). This edition contains some 105,000 words of new material, bringing it to one and a half times the length of the 1st—and up to date. Probably the most readable dictionary ever written. Cr. 4to, double-columned, 1476 pages. The set: 6 guineas; separately, original Dictionary and the Supplement, 70s. each. (U.S.: Macmillan, \$18.00.) Then there is *A Shorter Slang Dictionary* for schools and homes; 2nd edn, revised, 21s. (U.S.: Philosophical, \$4.75.)

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can be fascinating.

Your paper on  
Bungtown coinage should  
be a 'wow' — or don't  
you still use the  
term?

Please excuse haste:  
am up to my ears  
in work.

Yours as ever,  
Eric Partridge

13 February 86

Dear Mr Newman,  
Many thanks for  
your letter (Feb. 7) received  
this morning

The bung(hole) terms will  
appear in the new edition  
of Shakespeare's Bawdy; I hope  
to 'get down to it' in  
June, D.V. They haven't  
been adopted — at least, the  
Bungtown examples haven't —  
by British Slang & therefore  
do not appear in FT Dict.  
& Slang.

Good luck to you  
here on early American



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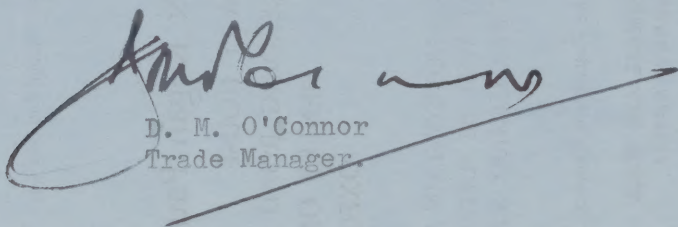
E. P. Newman, Esq.,  
P.O. Box 14020,  
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Dear Mr. Newman,

Thank you for your letter of 3rd September. "Shakespeare's Bawdy" is to be published in paperback in November at a price of 14/-.

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